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Sixty-fifth year

Identical letters dated 26 July 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour of writing you to request your kind assistance in circulating the present letter and its annex, the Action Plan of Engagement, as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 14, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Alexander **Lomaia**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the identical letters dated 26 July 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Action Plan for Engagement

Introduction

Georgia is committed to a renewed, long-term outreach to the populations of its regions of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, who are under Georgian jurisdiction and are entitled to all benefits available to Georgian citizens. *Georgia seeks to engage with these populations, to reduce their isolation and to improve their welfare, in the interest of human and regional security.*

This policy was set forth in the engagement strategy approved by the Government of Georgia in January 2010. This Action Plan puts that commitment into practical effect, with a range of initiatives that promote the general welfare of the populations currently legitimately residing in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, enable their greater access to benefits and participation in wider civic life and lay the foundation for future reconciliation between divided communities.

All principles of the Action Plan apply in equal measure to the respective populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, to their legitimate residents without regard to ethnicity, religion, sex or political beliefs. The Government of Georgia recognizes the differing challenges — from geography, demographics and political considerations — to engagement with the two populations, and the different preferences and opportunities available, and these have been taken into consideration in particular components of the Action Plan.

This is a human-centred approach; the Action Plan is intended to create a favourable environment for intensifying interaction, cooperation and partnerships between the populations across the division lines and to build confidence among all the communities of Georgia. Through the success of these measures, the Government of Georgia seeks to achieve reconciliation and greater trust between divided communities.

The Action Plan follows from the pursuit of *four dimensions* of engagement — humanitarian, human, social and economic — that encompass a comprehensive range of programme areas, with projects falling under one or more programmes. *Seven instruments* will enable the activities the Action Plan promotes and serve the projects created under it. These instruments exemplify the bottom-up approach of the Action Plan, which rests on grassroots initiatives.

All initiatives carried out under the Action Plan will be in accordance with Georgian law; many will require new procedures and administrative structures. The Action Plan includes the legal basis necessary to implement the initiatives of the Government of Georgia. After the Action Plan is adopted, a package of legislative amendments will be drafted and submitted to the Parliament of Georgia.

The Law on Occupied Territories, adopted in October 2008 by the Parliament of Georgia and amended in February 2010 in accordance with the recommendations

of the Venice Commission, reserves to the Government of Georgia the right to consent on activities that respond to humanitarian needs and support confidence building. The Action Plan is the expression of the Government of Georgia's support for projects and programmes that are in line with the goals of the engagement strategy and in compliance with the Law on Occupied Territories. An executive edict will provide for a prior approval of projects carried out under the Action Plan, obviating the need for exemptions from the Law on Occupied Territories.

Methodology

The Action Plan reflects the Government of Georgia's intentions, but it has been developed in concert with all stakeholders in the engagement strategy: political parties, civil-society organizations, groups of experts, international NGOs, foreign governments and intergovernmental organizations. It incorporates previously adopted joint projects and confidence-building measures with Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and drafts have been shared with the authorities in control in those regions. The Action Plan's success will require the continued interest and support of all stakeholders.

The Action Plan is a comprehensive document and framework for future development. It centers on *four dimensions* of *programme areas and projects* to directly benefit the populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and their engagement with counterparts across the division lines, which are enabled by a collection of *seven instruments*.

The Office of the State Minister for Reintegration (SMR) is the lead agency in developing the Action Plan, and will oversee its implementation. The SMR will coordinate the efforts of the Georgian Government in support of the Action Plan. The SMR will welcome the advice of civil society in coordinating the efforts of implementing partners.

The Action Plan is a *foundation* for the programmes that will serve the Strategy. It is a living document; the Action Plan will be subject to an operational review every six months, and to a strategic review after three years, by an interministerial working group under the Deputy Prime Minister/State Minister for Reintegration. This working group will monitor and evaluate implementation of the Action Plan, with input from all stakeholders.

The Government of Georgia actively seeks project contributions from partners in the Action Plan's implementation as well as from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and it will establish a consultation mechanism for these contributions.

Four Dimensions of Engagement

The Government of Georgia seeks comprehensively to engage with the populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, along humanitarian, human, social and economic dimensions. The heart of the Action Plan is a catalogue of projects that seek directly to improve the welfare of the populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia — so that they have the same opportunities available to the rest of Georgia — and support interaction between divided communities. The urgency of addressing these needs is underscored by the United Nations' 2015 target date for meeting the Millennium Development Goals

for poverty, health care, education, gender equality, environmental protection and international cooperation.

The State Strategy identified a number of programme areas and goals; the Action Plan elaborates projects within them that the Government of Georgia has already undertaken, intends to undertake or seeks partner organisations to undertake. The programme areas are:

Humanitarian Dimension

- Humanitarian relief
- Natural disasters
- *Human dimension*
- Intercommunity relations
- Preservation of cultural heritage and identity
- Free flow of information
- Human rights
- Youth activities

Social Dimension

- Education
- Health care
- Environment

Economic Dimension

- Trade
- Joint Production
- Communications
- Infrastructure

Instruments for Engagement

Seven new instruments enable implementation of the Action Plan. Different instruments provide for the integration of residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia into Georgian civic life; facilitate communication and coordination between Tbilisi and the authorities in control in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia; and create the institutional, financial and administrative bases for projects carried out under the Action Plan. Each instrument will serve a distinct, complementary purpose. While these instruments will be free standing, the SMR will coordinate their functioning and will continue to develop and implement Georgia's policy of engagement with Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

Status-Neutral Liaison Mechanism

The Action Plan will establish a status-neutral liaison mechanism (LM) to facilitate communication among the Government of Georgia, the authorities in control in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and voluntary associations operating in there. The LM will facilitate or execute mutually approved projects and support implementers in their operations.

The LM will consist of Liaison Officers appointed with consent from both parties, with offices and small support staffs in Sokhumi, Tskhinvali and Tbilisi. It can be based on previous arrangements, such as the Georgian/ Abkhaz Joint Bilateral Coordination Commission. The LM will be operated under the umbrella of an international humanitarian organization.

Neutral Identification Card and Travel Document

Two new documents will allow residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia greater access to social services and freedom of movement. These documents will be introduced without prejudice to Georgian citizens' identification cards or passports.

The entire population of Georgia is entitled to the same civil rights and social benefits, and the Government of Georgia seeks to improve access for all. To address the practical and political difficulties that some legitimate residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia face in obtaining Georgian identification documents, legislation will be introduced that provides for an easily obtained "neutral identification card" (NID), which allows the holder to claim all the social benefits available to Georgian citizens, to conduct business and other activities in Georgia and to seek employment in the private or public sectors. ("Neutral" in this sense means "neutral with respect to citizenship status". The issuance and acceptance of an NID is solely for practical purposes. For residents of Abkhazia, the NID will be written in Georgian and Abkhaz, in accordance with the Constitution of Georgia).

This card enables the holder to acquire a "neutral travel document" (NTD), allowing for travel abroad (the NTD is, essentially, a laissez-passer). The NTD will obviate the need for a foreign passport issued in violation of international law, as confirmed by the report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia ("Tagliavini Report"). The NTD will be developed with the assistance of international legal experts, to benefit from lessons learned elsewhere and to harmonize with international law.

Trust Fund

A trust fund (TF), managed by an international organization according to best practices, with an advisory function for donors, will be established to provide grants to implementing organizations operating in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and across the division lines. The TF will ease the matching of donors and grantees and ensure that funded projects support the goals in the four dimensions of the Action Plan, but will not preclude funding of worthy projects by interested donors, in consultation with the SMR.

The precise format of the trust fund will be determined after adoption of the Action Plan; models might include the EU-Africa Infrastructure Trust Fund or the

World Bank Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund. The TF will also take into account lessons learned from the EU/UNDP Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM).

Joint Investment Fund

A joint investment fund (JIF) will be established to provide seed money to ventures operating in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and across the division lines. The JIF will support businesses that promote local economic development, generate employment and build commercial ties between communities on both sides of the division lines. The privately operated JIF will be jointly funded by donors and businesses, and will engage the services of national and regional Chambers of Commerce.

Cooperation Agency

A cooperation agency (CA) will be established to enable and facilitate interactions across the division lines. Implementing the engagement strategy will require new functions that cannot be delegated from existing executive agencies, so the CA will be established as a legal person of public law (LPPL) under the authority of the SMR. The CA will act in accordance with the policies of the Government of Georgia in assisting state-funded programmes. It will assist organisations that seek help in finding partners across the division lines, coordinate the efforts of local authorities to improve the local operating environments, ensure that project activity and business development complies with Georgian and international law and promote opportunities to potential implementers in Georgia and abroad.

Financial Institution

The normal operations of humanitarian and development organizations and businesses present in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia entail financial transactions there. A financial institution (FI) will be established in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia that will allow for accounts setup and maintenance, cash transfers and other legal transactions. One option is for the FI to be operated by a bank already established in Georgia, without offering all the services of a retail or commercial bank.

Integrated Social-Economic Zone

Integrated Social-Economic Zones (ISEZ), with facilities for business and social services, will be established in the areas adjacent to the division lines in territory under Georgian control, thereby creating demand for goods and service from across the division lines.

An ISEZ creates a value chain across the division line, from the supply of raw materials to production, packaging, quality control and distribution. It will focus on agriculture, but envisages the development of other added-value businesses. The concept also entails a needs assessment and providing seeds and technical assistance (vocational training, machinery for cultivation and maintenance, etc.) to farmers. Processing and packaging facilities for agricultural products will be built within the ISEZ. The benefits to businesses could trump political objections and the added transaction costs of crossing the division lines.

Enterprises operating in an ISEZ and employing the population there may be exempted from some taxes.

An ISEZ will also promote agricultural exports, taking advantage of Georgia's business ties as well as special trade regimes that Georgia enjoys or will enjoy in the future. An accredited laboratory and standards agency will certify for export products produced in the zone as well as those brought there from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

Programme Areas and Projects

This list is illustrative and should not be regarded as definitive; the Government of Georgia invites all interested parties to propose and carry out projects that support the shared goals expressed in the Action Plan. Furthermore, the programme areas are only for clarity of organisation; many projects serve multiple goals and fit within multiple programme areas. (Unless otherwise specified, "joint" refers to populations on both sides of division lines, with a special emphasis on IDPs and divided communities.)

Humanitarian Dimension

Humanitarian Relief

The Action Plan supports the ongoing efforts of those organizations providing relief to the conflict-affected populations of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, saving lives, alleviating suffering and maintaining human dignity. New instruments established under the Action Plan will reduce the administrative burden on these organizations.

Natural Disaster Response

Natural disasters affect populations without regard for division lines. The Action Plan includes measures to reduce the harm from environmental disasters and epidemics in conflict-affected areas.

- Conduct joint analyses of common threats to which the region is prone, including earthquakes, landslides and avalanches and animal-borne infectious diseases.
- Develop joint emergency-preparedness mechanisms (rescue and rehabilitation).
- Conduct joint training for emergency responders.

Human Dimension

Intercommunity Relations

The Action Plan rests not only on cooperation in practical matters of material benefit, but on re-establishing connections that are essential to reconciliation and of value in their own right. Except where noted, these measures concern connections between communities residing in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and exiled communities.

The Action Plan builds on the confidence-building efforts and informal dialogue of civil-society groups. The Government of Georgia places particular

importance on United Nations Security Council resolution 1325, and the SMR will ensure that the Action Plan is implemented in its spirit.

The Action Plan will support initiatives that:

- Allow for visits for family events, including births, weddings, funerals and gravesite visitations and religious rites.
- Enable mixed families to gather and visit across the division lines.
- Allow for meetings of elders councils.
- Allow for religious pilgrimages and access to cultural and historical sites.
- Provide for exchanges between journalists.
- Provide for exchanges between professionals (not limited to exiled communities).
- Promote cultural and athletic exchanges (not limited to exiled communities).
- Establish a commission for reburials, prisoner exchanges and missing-in-action matters.

Preservation of Cultural Heritage and Identity

The Action Plan includes further measures to actively promote the preservation and development of Abkhaz and Ossetian cultural heritage and identity in Georgia. This includes measures to protect Ossetian as a national-minority language and Abkhaz as an official language in Abkhazia, as stipulated in the Constitution of Georgia.

- Produce books on Abkhaz culture, in Abkhaz and Georgian, and on Ossetian culture, in Ossetian and Georgian.
- Provide Abkhaz- and Ossetian-language training in Georgian schools and universities.
- Establish contacts with Abkhaz-Diaspora organizations engaged in cultural-heritage preservation and hold an annual conference on Abkhaz culture.
- Seek UNESCO support for joint activities on cultural preservation.
- Support the development of the Sokhumi archive (the Tbilisi archive is already donating materials).
- Establish Abkhaz- and Ossetian-culture centers in a museum in Tbilisi.
- Support Abkhaz- and Ossetian-language radio broadcasts.
- Provide for the free exercise of religion, by easing travel for clergy and the transport of religious articles across the division lines (handled in the LM).

Free Flow of Information

All elements of the Action Plan contribute to, and benefit from, the free flow of information between divided communities. The Action Plan contains measures targeted at improving the flow:

- Provide for regularly scheduled meetings of journalists from Abkhazia, the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia and the rest of Georgia.
- Include residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia in Georgian study tours or other programs to the EU, NATO and other international organisations.
- Provide a joint web portal for communication and social networking between divided communities. Promote use of the internet, taking advantage of the low-cost, high-speed access provided by the Government of Georgia.
- Improving the capacity of radio- and television-transmitting stations near the division lines.

Human Rights

Georgia has an interest in the protection of the human rights of all its residents, including those in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. The Action Plan includes measures to ensure those protections and promote understanding of human rights.

- Invite international human-rights organisations and intergovernmental organisations concerned with human rights to monitor human rights on the ground in conflict-affected areas, within agreed frameworks.
- Promote education on human-rights issues in conflict-affected areas, by translating and providing instructional booklets and holding seminars.
- Support groups advocating for social justice and property rights in conflict-affected areas.

Youth Activities

Young people of the divided communities do not have preconflict memories of their shared past. The Action Plan includes athletic, cultural and recreational activities to bring together youth from across the division lines, to promote friendship and understanding in the next generations.

- Stage concerts and theatrical productions with youth performers from across the division lines.
- Hold sports tournaments and clinics for young athletes from across the division lines.
- Create summer camps for children from across the division lines.
- Promote joint youth-leadership programmes for the future elites of Georgia.
- Extend the eligibility for youth grant programs to residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

Social Dimension

Education

In order to ensure that residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia have access to the education benefits/avenues offered to all Georgian citizens, holders of the NID are eligible for entrance to Georgian universities, for

international scholarship programmes for Georgian students and for international exchange programmes for Georgian teachers. The Action Plan, further, introduces proactive steps to ease and encourage the availability of existing educational avenues to residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia:

- Extend the offer of nationwide university-entrance exams in Abkhaz and Ossetian languages to NID holders, and introduce exams in Russian for them.
- Certify to international standards educational credentials of students from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
- Provide all first-grade pupils in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia with a laptop computer, under the new Government of Georgia nationwide "one laptop per child" programme.
- Extend the new "Teach and Learn with Georgia" programme to Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia. This programme provides a thousand English-language instructors across Georgia; other programmes could support widespread instruction in European languages that allow for greater international integration.
- Create elementary textbooks and kindergarten-level reading materials in Abkhaz and Ossetian, under an extraministerial commission and a task group at the Georgian Ministry of Education, in collaboration with scholars from Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
- Expand the scope of Abkhazian studies at Tbilisi State University, and establish academic exchanges with institutions in Abkhazia.
- Offer research grants for joint research projects.
- Offer support (printed materials, electronic resources, facilities and management) to libraries in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.

Health care

All health-care benefits for Georgian citizens are open to residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia; holders of the neutral ID are able to receive medical treatment in Georgia, including emergency transportation. The Action Plan includes further active measures to improve health and health care in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia:

- Conduct joint needs assessments to determine which resources are best made available in Tbilisi and what needs to be provided in Zugdidi or Gori. Focus on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, cancer, drug abuse and trans-boundary infectious threats.
- Form joint working groups on health care, with an emphasis on early warning.
- Conduct inventories of ongoing medicine needs in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, for insulin and tuberculosis drugs.
- Extend eligibility for health insurance to residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, and establish a special operating fund for those conditions not covered by health insurance.

- Provide mobile clinics to residents of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
- Provide opportunities for cooperation on sanitary and phytosanitary issues.
- Provide HIV/AIDS voluntary counselling and testing services.
- Provide access to infertility treatment.

Environment

The natural environment is a treasure of all of Georgia's regions, and environmental degradation does not respect political division lines.

- Promote protection of the environment in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, through support to environmental NGOs, advocacy groups and watchdog organisations.
- Establish protected areas in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/ South Ossetia, on the model of Georgia's national-parks system. Seek UNESCO protected-area status.

Economic Dimension

Trade and division-line crossings have persisted, despite the hardships imposed by conflict, as a result of established relations and the proximity of production and trading centers on both sides. In particular, Zugdidi and Gori are attractive markets for businesspeople and consumers in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, respectively, as they are closer than other potential markets of equivalent size and because many goods are less expensive there than elsewhere.

The Action Plan supports existing trade relations by eliminating obstacles, and promotes new trade opportunities. Measures to improve economic relations, infrastructure and transportation links include:

Trade

- Ease access to market by offering buses from the division lines to Zugdidi, Kutaisi, Batumi, Gori or Tbilisi, or allowing buses with license plates issued in Abkhazia or the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia to cross the division lines and improving roads to trading centers.
- Promote employment and the development of labour-intensive industries, through vocational education and the establishment of learning centres in the ISEZs.
- Enable integration into international commerce, by establishing an accredited quality-control laboratory and standards agency to certify production to international and regional standards.

Joint Production

- Promote joint production ventures.
- Provide start-up funding to joint-production ventures operating across division lines.

Communications

- Re-establish postal service with Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
- Provide low-cost, high-speed internet service to Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
- Restore the Gori-Tskhinvali transmission line to provide communications services to the population of the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia.
- Conduct joint studies on the Poti-Sokhumi undersea trunk line, to provide a broad range of telecommunications service and information access to the population of Abkhazia.

Infrastructure

- Establish a passenger-ferry service between Batumi and Sokhumi.
- Rehabilitate irrigation systems.
- Rehabilitate schools and hospitals in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvaliregion/South Ossetia, providing sanitation and protection against the elements. A project would conduct a needs assessment and prioritize facilities for rehabilitation.

Office of the State Minister for Reintegration
6 July 2010